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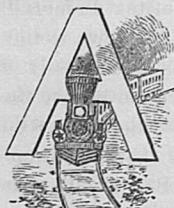
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THE IDEAL IN ART.



RT is prophetic, and introduces to reality. For the ideal is not opposed to the real, but to the actual and apparent. The external world contradicts and resists the tendency of the soul, and yields reluctantly to our desires. Yet it yields. As the body is refined and made obedient and expressive, so the whole circumstance and condition of man is plastic, and is expanding to embody his ideas, to serve his interior need. The poet is he who sees that the ideal waits very near and solicits us—that the elements of a noble and beautiful life are within reach, but unrecognized, lying hidden under the visible.

The world is full of vague longing; of people who know only that they were made for a destiny they have not found. They grope blindly and miss the way of life. The girls sigh for love and friendships, for sympathy, which means honor and appreciation. The boys look for a career, for worthy enterprises to justify their self-estimate. Men and women seem to have been cheated of themselves. They are wishers, if not seekers. Neither their means nor their ends content them. The news, and dress, and dinner, and chores, calls and compliments, dull duties, and tedious pleasures, leave an empty day.

Yet we never lose faith in a day that shall overflow with service and beauty. For in moments there is revealed to us a life which not only fills time, but constitutes eternity. This belief points and leads to the firmest reality. Healthy imagination is not a builder of air-castles, but of the most solid habitations. Every mortal is drawn to his good like a plant toward the sunshine.

"Remain true," said Schiller, "to the dream of thy youth." But every dream of youth fades before the privilege of noble manhood. The certainties of the Maker are better than the wishes of children. Life is a satisfaction which shames our desires. To the wise, who alone have tasted its sweetness, it is a festival of fair relations and high influences.

The foolish think it is a secret of getting, and holding, and having. The good have learned that it is an activity, a creating, and giving, and doing. The ideal is

shut against all who think of man as a vacuum and sanctum. He is a centre of radiation. He is so near his source, that he may take what power he can reach to desire, and his delight is in helpfulness, in kindling from his private spark a universal flame of benefit. The day refuses to be filled with eating, with play, with titles, with diplomas and applauses, with friends and companions. We see that the fountains are not hidden in any position, or society, or accident.

But thought and affection, a worthy task, a lofty hope, a power to cheer, and to inspire, to counsel and invigorate men, will leave you nothing to seek, but endless continuance of such satisfaction. We desire to be lovers and benefactors, to make our coming everywhere a holiday, and our conduct and influence an expectation to all. But the masters of joy and beauty are rich, not in external, but in most interior resources. To insight and probity, the world is full of meaning and interest. There is no speech that can carry the delight of living, when once we have learned to live. The wise man has but one want. He lacks a channel for the distribution of his happiness. He is burdened with unbroken bread, in the midst of trembling hunger. He is only too lonely in his joy.

What do the young people expect? They see nothing to do worth doing, nothing to know worth learning. They sit with folded hands, and wait for the heavens to fall. If they would but take up the enterprise of creation, where it has been committed to them; if they knew that man is left to complete manhood, and woman, womanhood, they may enjoy what they can originate—no more. They shall find such society as they can make. There is the raw material, wherever hearts beat and eyes encounter. They shall find that every power makes its own field, every faculty opens its own sphere of action. Every enterprise awaits him who is prepared to undertake it.

"The readiness is all."

Heaven is not to seek, but to make, out of this stupid old world, which they neither value nor understand. They fancy they are superior to their lot. It is unworthy of them. This is superiority: to be able to make our arena of intelligence and love as wide as human want, as high as Heaven's bounty. No man can live so remote but every virtue of mine shall reach and

warm him. Power is that which cannot be contained, which does not wait for help or for means, but levels its own paths. To power the sea is a bridge, and the air a ladder. This is superiority, to embrace every human being in earnest good-will and endeavor—to have something to contribute so elastic and expansive that it will find out every creature, and quicken every pulse that beats. Wealth, and empire, and splendor are toys and trifles, but in your garret or in your garden, you may reach a thought that shall make every man dearer to every other man while the world endures. Power creates opportunity, and power is in devotion to the highest ends.

The wise man is followed by circumstances. His companion he will create, his society he inaugurates. He knows how to provoke poetry, and heroism, and worship in his fellows. The beast of the field rises, a man, to meet him, and soppish and foolish persons are magnetized by his purposes, and run cheerfully beside him upon immortal errands.

The ideal life is accessible then through character, from every level of condition. It is a moral state. It is the overflowing into word and deed of a life whose springs are opened in the infinite. Its opportunity is in the fullness of God, and the need of man.

The heart is a cup which is empty till it overflows. We have nothing to enjoy, till we have something to impart. He only lives who is, not a reservoir, but a fountain. We are seeking our birthright.

Slowly we learn that it is offered not in anything which one man is born to have, and another to want, but in our common relation to the ever blessed cause. To be human is to be haunted by perfection. The best we know of man is his discontent and craving. Before his own demands, he is ashamed of his best performance. Though he cannot justify, neither can he abandon, his self-reverence.

The ideal tendency is a universal and irresistible force. It is the gravitation of the soul to its source. This climbing of fire kindles a boundless hope. Our delight is in the constant ascension of being. External nature is a pile of brush-wood in the flame of life, when that arises: interior nature is this divine and inextinguishable flame. Art is the splendor which is thrown abroad.

That which we name the ideal, is therefore the real, the true, the permanent. It

is our own future which beckons, and in every right effort, we advance to enter it. If it shall rise, and rise before us with new and remoter invitation, it will still enrich the passing hour with hopes and energy. And this following of the best is that which we name life. It is not a containing, but an expansion. It is not definable or limited, but is a going forth forever. This tendency which we share is the original force which made the world, which animates matter, and is creating man. It is an activity which underlies and causes all, and we have named it spirit. Truth is our conscious relation to it, our partaking in its permanence and power. Truth is an opening to the ideal. A picture of man without aspiration is as false as philosophy without gravitation, or chemistry without affinity. A thought below our own we hold to be false and injurious to Nature. Base men lie to themselves in their distrust of all sincerity and virtue. Men and women, as they run, are worth meeting, because they may be magnetized into nobleness by your motives and character; but in a book or picture, common-place is intolerable. Every work is bad and false which merely seeks to re-produce what runs in the road. Truth respects the effort of that original, plastic energy, to break our routine of convention, and inaugurate new manners, and institute society by introducing man to man. The young women in America have discovered how easy it is to represent every-day life. The book-stores are catacombs of sketches, "so natural," of what we meet at tea-parties, and see in the pews on Sunday. But every imitation of external traits alone is false to Nature. She does not love cramp, and narrowness, and formality, but the instinct of freedom and universal desire for a brighter and better life. In the ideal we find the true meaning, and intention of Nature.

Therefore, for the sake of simple honesty, a work shall be ideal. The higher the nature disclosed, the more truth. The proper criticism upon a lascivious picture is that it is false and libelous. It dishonors the universe. For lewdness is not lack of drapery, but of modesty. There are faces whose exposure is a sin against public morals. No man need stir to expose the world of appetite or passion. We are too near the needed help in finding it. All strength is shown in the distance by which we can leave it out of sight, out of thought, out of power to affect us. As

essential goodness is disclosed to growing goodness, everything evil dwindles. The divine law gives character to this universe. An omission of that destroys the fidelity of any account of man. He is wise who sees everywhere preparing the triumph of purity and principle. He is the artist and servant of the Beautiful, who shows the tendency of thought to illuminate, of affection to purify, of reverence to dignify life.

B. A.

A TRANSIENT THOUGHT.

T cannot be denied that this is the era, predicted so long by the Prophets, when the world should show signs and wonders incomprehensible. A mania for something startling, new, unexpected, seems to have seized upon humanity; and we witness the whole mighty army of civilized man making forward in hot haste, as if each nation, with its grand battalions, were eager to be "in at the death" of the Old first. Life, indeed, bears the semblance of a dream. Man is clothing himself with mystery; and he draws around the hidden secrets of his mind a mystic robe that gives him the air and presence of a Creator. And his works do not serve to dispel the illusion, for each succeeding invention—or creation, if you please—shadows forth some attribute which our fathers were fain to call God-like. Science, indeed, with her claim, thought, and majesty, utters a preacher's truth in every page of her revelation; yet is man clothed with a mystery which ages will not solve—the mystery of his own power.

We are not of those who would tear aside the veil which shadows the future, and, by rushing headlong into innovations, research, and assumption, bring darkness and distress into the present, instead of light; but we are of those who claim for the mind the use and exercise of its unfathomed powers in the great illimitable sea of mystery which encircles us at every step. We claim for mind, supremacy: we ask the material world to bow down and worship it, as mind bows down and worships the Great Source of all its power. Yet, we do not ask for the exercise of this power in such a way as man shall not be honored, and good may not come. We do not claim a right to crush reason under foot, while imagination—the loftiest

attribute of the human intellect—runs rampant and wild, building up fantastic creations to usurp the place of the staid and real. Rather do we claim a right to have such a mind taught its error, and by proper restraints brought into the pale of reason; and when the enthusiast's brain cries out for an embodiment of his wild dreams of Progress, Socialism, Liberalism, &c., we would lay our finger upon his lips and whisper, "Beware!"

Darkness can never come again to the intellect, except that God, in his ways, should reproach its pride and assumption of God-like attributes, by wrapping around His handiwork a deeper veil of impenetrability than is now enclosing it. Light is all-present; and in the strange fields where research leads, we would have not a superstition or a fear to mark the way. Lead on, O Mind! Truth is of God, and truth can only be found by search into the darkness of the mine of the unrevealed. Play with the telescope into the heavens, until immensity is spanned with a bridge of science, over which the student and the child may walk. Dive into the deeps around, and unfold to gaze the secrets of the earth and sea. Pierce the problem of life itself, and make Nature yield up her secrets as the ground yields fruit when it is stirred. Awaken reason to its subtlest power, and let it reach into the very confines of the hidden, until truth is eliminated from its very spirituality. For, be it known, God alone is ever uppermost in the search, and the heart looks in upon itself with a confidence of a future life which shall burst away the materiality that now obstructs the mental vision; and all our research, all our striving, all our hope, shall draw themselves into one grand truth—immortality.

THE ARTIST'S OLD AGE.

BY MICHAEL ANGELO, IN HIS 86TH YEAR.

WELL-NIGH the voyage now is overpast,
And my frail bark, through troubled seas and rude,
Draws nigh that common haven where at last,
Of every action, be it evil or good,
Must due account be rendered. Well I know
How vain will then appear that favored art,
Sole idol long, and monarch of my heart:
For all is vain that man desires below.
And now remorseful thoughts the past upbraid,
And fear of two-fold death my soul alarms—
That which must come, and that beyond the grave.
Picture and Sculpture lose their feeble charms,
And to that Love divine I turn for aid,
Who from the cross extends his arms to save.